

The Family THOUGHTS ON METHODISM, &c.

CONTINUED.

IV. THE METHODIST MINISTRY.

On this part we wish to be understood as addressing ourselves to young ministers, or rather to what they should be, or the requirements necessary to qualify us for the sacred work of office of the Christian ministry. In doing this in all candour and respect for the ministers we hope no one will censure our brief remarks or put wrong constructions on anything we say. In the first place, our call to the work of the ministry should be from God. As Apostles, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—Gal. i. 1, v. 1. I scarcely need say this divine call and scriptural test of character are considered absolutely necessary in the case of all who are admitted as ministers into our connection, and are in perfect harmony and agreement with the manner in which candidates are received into our ministry. To the honour of Methodism none can enter into her communion and receive appointments to the ministerial office, as Christ's ambassadors, but those who are converted to God, and who prove the same by gifts of the Holy Ghost and fruits of their labour, which are evident signs and seals of their apostleship, and the highest credentials of their call and authority to preach the gospel. But there are other gifts and qualifications which although considered of a minor character, are nevertheless absolutely necessary to render the work of the Christian ministry thoroughly effective and useful, for instance, natural ability, entire consecration to God, mental culture and the happy art of discharging the various duties in connection with the work of the Christian ministry. As God is pleased to employ and bless human instrumentality to accomplish divine purposes, human effort must therefore in co-operation with divine help be constantly employed, and every means sanctioned by God and approved of by the church must be used to effect and consummate the things which God has promised to perform by man and winning souls to God. Every physical, mental and moral property and power which God has been pleased to bestow on us, should be consecrated to him without reserve for this most important work. Every gift and talent should be brought under tribute to Christ. In union with the apostles words and sentiments, the truly devoted ministry of Christ says, "I am not my own, &c." In order to accomplish these things, to rise to this standard of Christian perfection and moral excellence there must in the first place, be entire consecration to God and his service. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." By lines to the Lord must be our motto. By this we must be strengthened to perform every duty, surmount every difficulty and overcome every trial incidental to the work in which we are engaged. This will make us cheerful in affliction and happy amid toil and pain. When we rightly consider the solemn responsibilities and obligations of our work, we need to be in constant communion and intercourse with God, to walk with him as Enoch and the prophets did; live in the habitual exercise of faith and prayer as the apostles did; and have the example and faith. Methodism has had her Elishas and some are with us still, calmly waiting for the chariot of God to take her Elishas' too, and sons of the prophets. May the mantle of our Elishas' descend and fall on our Elishas as once it descended on the head of the seer chosen prophet by God.

The secret of their greatness and success was prayer, and if we would be great and good and successful we must pray also. Let us, like Moses the man of God, go up into the mount, into our closet, enter into the secret place of the most high and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. And shall we come forth before our people with our hearts glowing with divine love, our tongues moved with seraphic fire, and our faces radiant with the reflections of the divine glory. Then it will be seen and felt that we have been with Jesus, and our constant desire will be to do good.

Secondly, we observe there must be mental culture. As education and a thorough training in the various branches of knowledge and science are necessary to qualify men for the secular professions, it is surely of the utmost importance that candidates for our ministry should receive such an education and training as will, as far as learning goes, duly qualify and prepare them for performing the various duties of their sacred office. See Jackson's address delivered at Richmond College England, September 11, 1860. It is quite proper that all the men, entering our ministry should, if possible, be trained at our Theological Colleges.

The young men who are favored to reside during their preparation for the ministry at these hallowed halls of sacred learning are greatly blessed with the high-toned moral atmosphere which surrounds them, and the influence for good which is constantly brought to bear upon their persons and characters. They cannot fail during their residence at these schools of the prophets, to receive very great benefit not only from the learning imparted to them by their tutors but also from their piety and holy examples. And these students also improve each other in many ways, by their piety and devotion, receiving attention, counsel and help of all classes and characters within the bounds of the Methodist church and some of Protestant Christianity throughout the world. The Sabbath school is becoming year by year in every Christian country a connecting link between the world and the church, the congregation and the class meeting. In fact, true to its mission, it is becoming more and more a nursery for the church. And the great and noble of the earth, ladies and gentlemen of rank, wealth and influence, are occupying their time and bestowing their talent on this most delightful and useful employment of training the rising generation to fear God, and devote themselves to his service. Statesmen in England, Governors in the Provinces, Senators in the United States of America and the merchants and Parliament men of Australia, are to be seen in the ranks of our Sabbath schools. "Kings and Queens shall become nursing fathers and mothers" in the Israel of our God. Nothing more honorable or glorious.

V. METHODIST LAY AGENTS. The lay element of the Methodist church has always been considered to be very useful and important in many respects, affecting the increase, extension and consolidation of our society, and the working and prosperity of the church in some of her principal departments. This has been seen in England, America and Australia where there are great numbers of local preachers, class leaders, and officers of a local and lay character. So useful and instrumental in doing good work has the lay agency proved to be in our church, that other churches are following our example. Seeing then the great good resulting to the church from the utility, zeal and piety of the lay element, ought not every thing to be done to promote, establish and continue its usefulness? We should do our best to improve the character and qualifications of our local preachers, class leaders, sabbath school teachers, &c.

Let them do their best to improve their literary and religious attainments, their social status and moral character. Let our lay agents be well read in our standard theological, magazines and other periodicals, memoirs and general literature. Let them as far as possible be intelligent, respectable, upright and holy people. Patterns of piety in close communion and sympathy with Christ and his ministers. Here let me say, too much sympathy cannot exist between the laity and the ministry, and the whole church and her Divine Head. Every member in sympathy with Jesus. We also strongly advocate Female Lay Agency to a certain extent. Doctor Johnson of London, England recently said in a speech delivered at the Home Missionary Meeting, City Road, London. "And in these days of sisterhood they should take care of female agency and not undervalue it." The influence of pious women for good is great. Both the Old and New Testament Scriptures prove this, and our church is rich with the biographies and memoirs of holy and devoted women, whose lives and labours so beautifully recorded, have graced the history and memory of Methodism. What beautiful illustrations and examples of saintly devotedness, heroic zeal, Christian meekness and exalted piety, do we see exemplified in the lives of Mrs. Fletcher, Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, Mrs. Tatham, Miss Cutler and Miss George? We might mention other pious females who have been consecrated to society, such as Mrs. Fry and a Mrs. Martin, whose deeds of piety and Christian philanthropy are well and deservedly known to millions. The world will not be evangelized without the assistance of female help and agency. Female missionaries are now sent from America to evangelize the women of India. The Marys of New Testament history were devoted to the Saviour and the Marys of the present day can manifest similar zeal, and holy love. By attending Bible classes, class meetings, reading the scriptures to the poor, teaching in the Sabbath school, visiting the sick, tract distribution, collecting for missions and every good work. Would to God we could see more holy mothers training their children for the services of Christianity and the moral reformation of the world, thus becoming in an eminent and useful manner lay agents of the church. In conclusion on this part let me say the elite and wealth of our congregations should think themselves honoured by being local preachers, class leaders, sabbath school teachers, &c. None too good to work for God.

VI. RELATIONSHIP, UNION AND SYMPATHY EXISTING BETWEEN THE MINISTRY AND THE LAITY. The laity should always act in concert with the ministry, assisting with their counsel and kindness and benevolent and useful labours. They should certainly work harmoniously together. Not like it has sometimes been when the laity do nothing but find fault, and carp at the ministry without rendering the least assistance to help on the work of the Lord. If all office bearers and members and the congregations at large, both professing and non-professing, considered and acted as they should, ministers would not be so burdened with secular matters, and so straitened in their temporal wants and corresponding circumstances, as they frequently are. And many of our wealthy people would not be so burdened with the duties of the Saviour, the great reformers of the 16th century, Wesley, Fletcher and others who followed their example and faith. Methodism has had her Elishas and some are with us still, calmly waiting for the chariot of God to take her Elishas' too, and sons of the prophets. May the mantle of our Elishas' descend and fall on our Elishas as once it descended on the head of the seer chosen prophet by God.

VII. OUR INSTITUTIONS. Our institutions secular and religious should receive the most careful attention, zealous cooperation and earnest support of the church generally. All our schools and colleges should receive the patronage of the Methodist public; especially our Theological Colleges which demand our utmost sympathy. Now many times by means of personal observation that those who have most zealously defended and supported the ministry have prospered and God, let love beget love. Love all for Jesus' sake and their labour of love in promoting the welfare of man as seen in the salvation purchased by Christ for every member of the human family. Then shall Zion prosper and the church be blessed, and it will be said by all, "Behold, how good and how pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

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VIII. EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN. The education of our children demands our serious consideration and strictest attention. With all due deference for all who may differ from us in matters affecting our creed, doctrine, church discipline and forms of religious worship, we do not think it amiss to say that all our children should be educated at our own seminaries, schools, academies and colleges; and those who have tutors or governesses in their own houses for that purpose, should be very careful to select such persons from the ranks of our own church, who are thoroughly Methodist in heart and life.

If you desire to see your children become useful members of our own church, be careful how and by whom they are educated. Do not send your sons to school where their religious principles will be placed in peril. Do not allow them to be educated by men however clever whose minds are in the least tainted with scepticism, or whose faith is not orthodox. Neither send them to those places where Methodism is despised and ridiculed. Neither allow your daughters to be educated by nuns and ladies of the high church school. Beware of lady Jesuits, whose constant aim is to proselyte all who come within the compass of their refined sophistry and subtle influence. Some have been so foolish as to allow their children to be placed under the tuition and care of such people have paid smartly for it. Some have been made converts to a false and superstitious religion; and others have again have become vain and formal and useless members of the church to which they belonged. And here let me say according to the increase of our societies and congregations, there has been an increase in the number of Methodist educational establishments become an excuse for not having our children educated by Methodist teachers, and in all our places and halls of learning, let Bible classes, class and prayer meetings be established. Let our children be trained in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it. Too much attention cannot be bestowed on the mental and moral training of our youth. It is very evident from various facts and circumstances which are daily occurring that if we would maintain our proper position and extend our work, we must as the great means for accomplishing this pay strict attention to the education of our youth, and we should endeavour to make our schools nurseries and auxiliaries for the church. Whatever may be the branches of learning taught, let them also be instructed in the law and doctrines of the Lord. And let them be made acquainted with the history and institutions of the Methodist church. Whatever may be their scholastic attainments, however versed in learning and however exalted their minds and lofty their genius, let them possess a practical knowledge of our standard theology and general literature, hymns and catechisms. This should not be considered unnecessary and out of place. Many of our Methodist youths will be filling important places in society. Some undoubtedly will fill seats in the legislature and parliament of their country, others will fill other important positions and exalted spheres of life. Some of these may become ministers of the gospel, ambassadors of Christ, which although in a pecuniary point of view is little in comparison with the rich emoluments derived from secular professions and pursuits, is nevertheless the most honorable and exalted position when viewed in relation to the sacred mission and the light of eternity, which man can fill! Let our youth remember that this success in the future depends in a great measure on the principles they imbibe and which are instilled into their minds while young. Let it not be forgotten that religious education will impart grace and beauty to every attainment in secular knowledge and to every possession for the society of the great and good on earth, and the inheritance of the saints in light, in knowledge, in purity, in heaven.

IX. METHODIST LITERATURE AND STANDARD THEOLOGY. In just glancing at these points we shall not institute any comparisons between our own theology and literature, and those of other sections of the church, our principal aim is to call the attention of Methodist people generally to the works, periodicals and papers issued from our Book Rooms. What we desire is, to see a wide circulation and more extensive dissemination of our Methodist literature. Much very much, might here be advanced in support of this. The influence of our magazines, periodicals, memoirs and general literature, which should be read and known by all our people, rich and poor. This would act as a safeguard against the introduction into our families of the light and pernicious, loose and corrupt literature of the present day. Cheap books are very often the worst of books. Let us not forget the reading of a book has sometimes a great tendency towards the formation of principles in the mind, especially the youthful mind. We should also be careful in reading the writings of those divines whose theological teachings are at variance with our own church, and the standard theology of our own church, and beware of Unitarianism and Universalism, and be careful how you read the writings of Calvinistic authors. Now we do not confine ourselves exclusively to our own authors. Let us gather honey from every flower. But all have not discretion to do this. And the safest course is the best to pursue. With our own works read to great spiritual profit the works of Puritan divines and other authors of eminent piety. But let us replenish our libraries with works from our own Book Rooms.

LITTLE THINKERS. Little thinkers, looking upward To the mother's love-lit face, Hearing her descriptions, glowing With the warmth of tender grace, What think you, while she is talking, Of the holy, heavenly place?

Little thinkers, looking outward To the world where ye must fight, Do you see the looming shadows? Of the thickly gathering night? Do your thoughts, made strong beforehand, Cry unto the Lord for light?

Little thinkers, thought is serious, Yet to us it seemeth well, Now and then amid your play-time, For an earnest thought to swell; And your life may be the better For the musing—who can tell?

Only little ones, remember, God alone can make you wise; Raise to him your aspirations, Lift to him your thoughtful eyes; He will bless you in the future, He will take you to the skies.

—Appl. of Gold.

WASHING BLANKETS. Who does not dread this operation? And yet with the assistance of a washing machine and wringer, this old-time burden may be eased wonderfully, at a great saving to the wrists and hands, with no detriment to the quilts and blankets. Rub no soap upon them; fill up the washer or tub with suds, made by dissolving the soap in warm water; rise in warm water, as very cold or hot water will shrink anything made of wool. Shake out well before hanging out to dry. If you fear the colors of your quilt, raise them by themselves, adding to the rinsing water forty drops of clear of violet, with a teaspoonful of dissolved gum arabic, and then wring well, hanging them to dry in the shade, where the wind will dry rapidly.

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WILLIAM H. BROWN.

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